



Sandra Roberts

Oral History Transcription

August 27, 2004 [Side A]

Interviewed by:	David Healey
Place of interview:	Indiana University South Bend
Date of interview:	August 27, 2004
Approximate length of interview:	47 minutes
Transcribed by:	Original transcriber unknown. Updated to new format by George Garner, CRHC Assistant Director and Curator.
Date of transcription:	August 2021
Summary:	<p>Sandra Roberts was born in South Bend in 1938 and grew up on the east side. She attended racially mixed elementary and junior high schools before transferring to the predominantly white John Adams High School, graduating in 1956. She experienced racial discrimination but was able to navigate both Black and white social circles due to her light complexion. She attended Indiana University for three years where she was runner-up for Miss Indiana University. She left college after meeting her future husband, a professional baseball player. Roberts married in 1961 when interracial marriage was still illegal in Indiana, requiring special permission from a judge.</p>

0:00:00 [David Healey] Today is August 27, 2004. I am David Healey. I am interviewing today... Miss? Mrs. Sandra Roberts and we are at Indiana University South Bend. John Charles Bryant will be joining us shortly. Sandra, you are a native of South Bend?

0:00:24 [Sandra Roberts] Yes, I am.
[DH] You were born here in South Bend?
[SR] Yes. I was born on October 26, 1938 in St. Joseph Hospital.
[DH] Where did your parents live?
[SR] When I was born, we lived at 1107 Georgiana St., which is on the east side, right off of South Bend Ave.

0:00:52 [DH] So you're an east side girl.
[SR] Yeah.
[DH] What did your father do?
[SR] He called himself an interior and exterior decorator. He was a painter. He painted new homes, and I forget the name of the man that he worked for. But he was a painter, and he was a very good wallpaper hanger, and he got a lot of business because he was good.

0:01:22 [DH] And your mother?
[SR] My mother was a housewife until we were grown and she went out and did labor.
[DH] As a domestic?
[SR] As a domestic, yes.
[DH] What about brothers and sisters?
[SR] I have two brothers and one sister. I am the oldest of four; Billy William Atu Roberts, Pamela Joe Roberts, and William Robert E.D. Roberts.

0:01:52 [DH] Now did you grow up on the east side of South Bend?
[SR] Yes
[DH] Where did you go to school?
[SR] I went to elementary school at Perley Elementary School, and in junior high I went to Central for the seventh, eighth, and ninth grades. Then some of the teachers told my mother I was hanging with people that

were a bad influence on me. But somehow she was able to get me transferred to Adams, John Adams. My uncle, her brother, somebody he knew on the board. So I ended up at Adams my tenth, eleventh, and twelfth grades.

[DH] In retrospect, were these people really unsavory people?

[SR] No, they weren't. I didn't think there were any unsavory people in the school at the time. I didn't know what that was all about.

0:02:43 [DH] What was your experience like at Perley?

[SR] Perley was a mixed school as far as I think. It seems to me that there were as many whites as blacks at the time.

[DH] It was a transitional neighborhood in that era.

[SR] Yes. I had mixed friends. As a matter of fact, one of my best friends... I mean we use to do things like, I'd wear her right shoe and she would wear my right shoe, and we'd have each other's shoes on and things like that, but things changed in middle school. I went to Central and she went to Jefferson. I saw her downtown one day, and I got all excited, and I was with my friends, and she was with her friends she made. We were coming towards one another, walking up Michigan St., and I spotted her coming towards me she spotted me. When she got to me, I spoke to her and she turned her head like she didn't know who was I was. So that's when I really realized I was a little different, or something was different.

0:04:03 [DH] Was it because you friends were African American?

[SR] Yes, my friends were African American.

[DH] And her friends were white?

[SR] Yes, her friends were white, and she didn't want to know me then. That's when I started realizing racial discrimination or prejudice.

[DH] Did your parents ever talk to you about that subject?

[SR] I know my mother always emphasized that we were black; of course, it was called colored then. But she let us know what we were. She was proud of it, and when we were younger there wasn't much said about it.

0:04:46 I do remember one time in Perley School; I don't remember what grade we were in. We did this thing... they asked us to go home and ask our parents about our ethnic background, and my mother said, "O.K.". I said, "Mom, I need to know what I have in me because we are doing this thing in social studies class," or whatever class it was, and the teacher wanted to know what we are, and she said "Well, you tell them that you are Irish,

Indian, Scotch, and Negro,” and that’s what I went back and told them. When we had to get up and make our little say where our ancestors were from, she discussed that.

0:05:42 [DH] Now is this from you father’s side of the family?

[SR] My mother had Irish in her side of the family. Irish and Indian and “Negro,” as it was called then, and my father had Scotch, Indian, and Negro on his side of the family.

0:06:04 [DH] Did you ever discover why your parents moved to South Bend; what brought them here?

[SR] My mother grew up in Mishawaka.

[DH] Oh, so she was.....

[SR] She was one of the Powell’s, yes. My father grew up in South Bend. His father came from the Roberts settlement. I think he was born down in the Roberts settlement near Noblesville; in between here and Indianapolis. He was born there, and for what reason he came here, I don’t know. No, I *do* know why he came here! His father was an AME [African Methodist Episcopalian] minister, a traveling minister, so that brought them to South Bend, and he stayed and my father was born in South Bend.

0:06:53 [DH] After you left Perley, you went to Central. What grades were you in at Central before you left?

[SR] Central? Seventh, eighth, and ninth grades.

[DH] What kind of experience did you have with the school counselors at Central?

[SR] Counselors I really didn’t have any problems with. It was one of the teachers that kind of gave me a hard way to go; accused me every time he would turn his back to go to the black board. Somebody would talk and it would always be me, and I kept trying to tell him that I wasn’t. I think they sent a note home to my mother, and of course she jumped all over me and told me you need to be quiet in class. Back then they believed what the teacher told them; “Teachers always right and you’re wrong, and you were doing something that you shouldn’t have.”

0:07:44 One day he stopped me in the hall and asked me, “Why do you and John Charles”... that’s my cousin John Charles Bryant... “Why do you... every time I see you you’re hanging around with those colored kids?” And I told him, “Well, don’t you know because we’re colored? You know they’re our friends. That’s why we hang out with them all the time.” And then I kind of told my mother. Then when I went back and told her that that’s why he

was putting me in the corner all the time, and I knew I wasn't talking every time, maybe sometimes, but I wasn't the one that talked every time somebody talked in class.

0:08:23 [DH] I think it's important for the people who listen to the tape somewhere down the road that you and John Charles are very light complected.

[SR] Yes

[DH] So you could pass for white?

[SR] Yes, we could have passed for white.

0:08:36 [DH] How did that affect your African American friends? Did they have any problems with that?

[SR] Well, in elementary school, no, because it was just like I was Sandra Roberts. You know when you're younger you don't see color. I think the older you get, something happens. I don't know if it's from your parents, but you do realize that you are different.

0:08:53 When I got to Central, it was a little different. Some of the girls would say "You know you think you're better than us," because you got what they would call good hair, "and your light and the guys like you. That's the only reason why they like you, because you look like your white," and I was like, "No." But you know, then you get it from both sides. You know the blacks, as well as the whites, for the most part because my family was from South Bend, and they knew who Roberts were. To me it wasn't that hard. It would be just a few people that really didn't know me or who my family was.

0:09:41 [DH] The reason I ask you about the counselors... Did you have any encouragement to go to higher education, or were you in any programs that would facilitate you going to college, at Central?

[SR] I didn't know about a thing at Adams. I knew nothing about scholarships, and I graduated in the upper part of my class. I think I was 50 out of 225, or something like that. I was never taken in and told anything about scholarships or offered scholarships.

0:10:09 Before I went away to school, my father really couldn't afford to send me, so I had to stay home a year and work. He said, "If you will stay home and work a year, I'll try to help you go," so I did stay home a year. Then I went a school year, and then came back and worked another year, and went back and ended up not getting my degree done in, like, three and a half years. Then I got married and never went back to college. I promised my father I would, and I didn't. I still have bad dreams about that.

[DH] Well, there's still time...

[SR] Yeah, there's still time. Now that I'm retired, I might take my transcript somewhere and see what I can do with it.

0:10:45 But my brother is the one, when we would go to the counselors, they would try to tell us not to take college prep. So, my father I think... they let me take... but my brother Billy was just a C student, and went to be counseled about going to college. The high school said that he shouldn't take college prep, because he probably wouldn't have grades good enough to get into college anyway, but my father, when he found out, he went down there and told them, "My children will take college preparatory classes because, if I have anything to do with it, they are going to college." My father was a very smart man, but he didn't get the chance to go to college. He was going to make sure his children did.

0:11:36 So, Billy went on to college, and his grades got better and better. He came back here and became a teacher and a counselor at Nuner, and he became assistant superintendent of the school system. But when he worked at Nuner, he worked with the counselor that told him he wasn't college material. She was still the counselor, and he'd worked with her when his children were coming from Nuner to Adams. And I said to Billy, "Did you say anything to her about her telling you that you weren't college material? I'd have to say something to her like 'we are peers now'."

You know, my brother Billy was a very soft spoken, nice person. He said, "No Sandra, I didn't say anything." But I'm sure I'd let her remember or remind her what she'd told me.

0:12:33 [DH] You went... it was kind of unique. You left Central and went to Adams. Now that must have been a completely different experience at Adams.

[SR] Oh yes, it was, but I had friends there, too. I don't know the way the district was divided. The east side was divided, and I think it was divided by Eddy St. So anybody on the west side went to Central and all those on the east side went to Adams. By the time my sister came up, the lines had been changed. But I had friends there, too, so it wasn't that bad.

0:13:15 [DH] What was different about Adams versus Central?

[SR] You know what? Well, I had more friends at Central.

[DH] Were the teachers different? Were the counselors different? Did you have more opportunities at Adams than you did at Central?

[SR] No, I think I had more opportunities at Central. As far as the activities that I was involved in, I was in the orchestra at Central, and they let you

borrow instruments, and I played the cello. I used to carry that cello home, on the bus, from Central to the east side; the Notre Dame bus. Then went I got to Adams, I wanted to continue, but you had to own your own cello. Of course my parents didn't have money to buy me a cello, so I felt like I had more opportunities to do things at Central than I did at Adams because the families there were rich; they could afford to buy the instruments for their children.

0:14:21 And when they would ask what you did for the summer and things like that, of course they all traveled, and did all these things my family couldn't afford, and I think that the children at Central are more in the same boat that I was as far as their families income, and stuff like that, and things they would do in the summer. The culture was a little different but I kind of got used to it.

0:14:45 [DH] When you were in high school, as a young girl, you dated I assume, and things like that. Where did you go for fun? What did you do for recreation in South Bend?

[SR] Oh well, we had our nights. Monday night we went to Playland skating rink. That was the only night "negroes," as we were called then, were allowed to go skating. Thursday nights, the Natatorium at Washington St. Friday nights was Hering House. Every Friday night was Hering House.

0:15:26 [DH] What did you do at Hering House?

[SR] Oh, we danced and had... you could have a fair there, too, if you belonged to an organization. Clubs and things, you know, can rent the place out and have dances there. We had other things, too. I think HT Burly Associates... did we meet at Hering hall?

[John Charles Bryant] On Monday.

[SR] On Monday.

[JCB] They had the Jesters Club in Hering House, and then they played pool downstairs, for the boys. Luther Dixon was in charge of the boys and Ida was in charge of... Ida Mitchum was in charge of the girls. On Friday night all the people that worked at the Hering House sort of supervised.

0:16:10 [SR] Yeah, Friday night was Hering House night, which was everybody from the east side, west side, south side, and north side. That's where we would all meet and dance.

And then on Saturdays, I have gone to a couple of the [inaudible], and there were other girls clubs that we formed that we could just do things... dance and give parties, do service in the community. So [inaudible] would

have a dance once every six months at the Hering House or at the Knights Pythias. We would have dances and charge; use that money to... one of the main things we did was bake cookies and take things out to the orphanage in Mishawaka. They had an orphanage in Mishawaka, so we did service there and we kept our selves busy.

0:17:04 [JCB] At Highland cemetery, when you go into the cemetery, to the left --- the first row to the left, you see a statue of the Knight of Pythias. They bought an area of ground there, when Highland cemetery was available, so a lot of people that belonged to the Knights of Pythias (or they sold lots) are buried in that area. The Knights of Pythias, they were very active in the 1920s, 30s, 40s, and 50s here in South Bend. Their last location was on Colfax, right near Elm St., across from the city cemetery.

[SR] That's a little history there for you.

0:17:58 [DH] So, you because you were able to move in white circles and black circles interchangeably. Did you date African American young men?

[SR] Oh yeah, I went with a high school football star! He was the quarterback.

[DH] The reason I asked that, in other interviews I've come across, South Bend police were quite harsh when they saw an African American man with what they thought was a white woman. Did you ever run into any harsh treatment like that?

0:18:39 [SR] No. My mother told my father to tell me a story. My father wasn't that dark either; he could have passed for Italian or something, but they stopped him because... my mother grew up in Mishawaka, and I think he picked her up, and they were coming to South Bend, and the police did stop him, and questioned him and everything, but because my mother's family was so well known in Mishawaka... my grandfather had a barbershop, and he would cut a lot of townspeople's hair, so when they did find out who she was, because I think it was the Mishawaka police that stopped them, and she explained who she was, they let them go on.

0:19:28 But I can tell you an incident about me and Johnny in the school. He and I were walking up the steps; I think it was the principal.

[DH] Was it Central?

[SR] No, this was Adams. I had a whole lot of books in my arm, and he took my arm to help me with the load. I couldn't hold on to the banister because I had so many books, and the principal came up to us and said to him, "You're not allowed to touch her. Take your hands off of her! She can

get up the steps by herself!” and after looking around, we seen other white couples doing the same thing, but he didn’t say a word to them.

0:20:22 [DH] So when you were in high school, you went to the Hering House for dances. Did you go to the Palais Royale?

[SR] I don’t think that was in existence when I was coming along.

[JCB] You might share with Dave your experience on *Who’s Your Favorite*, which was your favorite (dance show) that was on television.

[SR] WNDU, I think it was. *Who’s Your Favorite?*. It’s a dance thing like Dick Clark.

[DH] Oh, the local (show).

[SR] It was local.

[DH] OK, what year would this be?

0:21:00 [SR] Probably in the 50’s. I was still in high school. I had to be a junior or senior because I was working at Investors Diversified Service, Inc., right down there on Washington St., right up from Central on the right-hand side. I had, like, a receptionist or a helper type job that I had. And coloreds got tickets to go on *Who’s Your Favorite?*, so I think it was a mixed group.

[JCB] Mark Dudeck, Bruce Saunders...

0:21:43 [SR] Yeah, but anyway, our club went on. Of course, the girls club, but we each got to take somebody with us to dance. I didn’t tell the people at the job that I was going on this show. I didn’t think it was necessary. So we went on the show, on T.V. and everything, and South Bend was watching us dance. Well, the next day, when I came in, I noticed that phone was ringing and ringing and ringing, because they (the show’s producers) had to interview you. They wanted to know where you went to school, and where you worked. I said I worked at Investors Diversified Service Inc. on Washington St. I was going on with whatever they asked me and I found out later that people were calling in to the company. I didn’t know what they were saying to them, but I did get laid off, because they said that they really didn’t need my help anymore.

0:22:48 Later on, I thought about... because I was on that show and because they were getting so many calls from their clients who said they saw me. They got this white girl working for them that goes on the TV, and dances with blacks, or Negroes, or something like that. I don’t know what was said, but I can just imagine what was being said on that phone. I no longer had a job after that.

- 0:23:15 And another interesting thing... you know they had work study in high school. When you're in high school, you can work. They would send you out on job hunts, as part of your credits that you would earn, and I applied at the telephone company. I remember them saying that they were going to come to interview me instead of me going to their office. I guess on the application you had to fill out your race and everything. I guessed they were inquisitive, but instead of me going there, they came to my home to interview me.
- He started asking me all these questions that most people don't get asked. I can't remember what they all were now, but it was like, "Do you have any problems, because you look like your white?" And my family was there; they were asking questions. That's the reason why I didn't get the job, but I know I was qualified.
- 0:24:12 DH: They came to your house.
- [SR] They came to the house to interview me. I think so they could see... maybe they were so curious, they wanted to see what my parents looked like.
- [DH] Do you remember what year this was in the '50s?
- [SR] It had to be, maybe '54, '55, something like that. I was still in school.
- 0:24:35 [DH] Then you graduated in '56?
- [SR] Yeah, I graduated in '56, because I ended up getting a job at Studebaker's.
- [DH] So Barbara Brandy was a little bit ahead of you at Central. Do you know Barbara Brandy?
- [SR] Barbara Brandy... do I know Barbara, John?
- [JCB] Charlotte Bailey's sister, her older sister?
- [DH] She was in a work study program at Central also.
- [JCB] ...and Peggy White.
- [SR] Charlotte and I were in the same grade, but she was older than Charlotte, right?
- [JCB] Right.
- 0:25:06 [DH] Where did you shop at out there?

[SR] All the stores downtown like Robertson's and Benton's. I'm trying to remember... John what was the name of the shop? Max Adler's, and it was a woman's shop?

[JCB] Simmons

[SR] Simmons, I think it was.

[JCB] That's where Gary Hammond's mother used to work.

[DH] It was a place called Ellsworth's.

[JCB] Ellsworth's, Wyman's.

[SR] Wyman's was across the street from the bank.

[JCB] ...Neumann's

[SR] My mother cleaned for the lady.

0:25:58 [DH] So you never had any problems shopping downtown? Did you feel there were any restaurants that you couldn't go to?

[SR] I don't recall. There weren't many restaurants I couldn't afford to go to then anyway, even if I wanted to.

[DH] Of course John always tells the story about the dance lessons that you and John took. Do you want to tell that story?

[SR] Oh, *that* story. John and I, now this is junior high school, but anyway, we were walking up the street, and we saw the Arthur Murray sign, and we *did* know that Arthur Murray did not give dance lessons to Negroes. So I said, "John, why don't you go in there and see if you can get some dance lessons? See if you can fool them." John says, "No, no, Sandra," and I said, "Go on in there and see what happens."

0:26:52 So he went in there. They had a sign in the window, "Free Week of Trial Lessons", to see if you want to take an eight-week course or whatever, so John goes in and tells them he was getting ready for the prom or something, and he would like to take dance lessons. So they said, "OK, well you take this class." Then he said, "Maybe if I do well, I will take the eight-week course." I don't know if he went every night after school, but I know he took that weeks' worth of lessons. When it was all over with, they tried to sign him up. Then he started asking questions—"Tell me one thing. Do you teach Negroes here? Do you give dance lessons to Negroes?" "Oh no, John! We don't! You don't have to worry about that." And John told them "Well, you're a damn liar because you just gave lessons to me for a whole week, and I'm colored!" and walked out! I said "No, you didn't!"

[JCB] You got to remember; at that time, I became a little more tolerant.

[SR] That was a good one on them.

0:28:04 [DH] You didn't take the lessons with John?

[SR] No, I didn't take it with him.

[DH] You just encouraged him into going in.

[SR] I encouraged him to go in and take them and he did.

0:28:15 [DH] You mention that you worked when you were in high school. How did you get your first job?

[SR] My first job was at St. Joe Hospital. I was a tray aide; I think they called it. You know when the places were three deep, my job was to pick up the trays, put them on a cart and take the cart down a raggedy elevator. Scared me the death every time I had to take it downstairs. That was my first job.

0:28:53 [DH] Were you in high school then? Did you apply for that job?

[SR] You know what? I don't remember; I must have. When I graduated, I worked at Robertson's, then at Carmine's. I can't remember the lady's name... when you filled the application out, they wanted your race. She started questioning me, and she said, "You have the cutest nose of any colored or Negro person I've seen," and she was nice about it. She said, "I'm going to give you a job because your race has a hard time getting a job," and she said, "I want to help you out." I explained to her that I wanted to go to school, to college. That's why I was working.

0:29:47 She gave me a job. She was a very nice lady. I don't remember her name. When I left to go to college, they had a shower for me, and they brought me a navy-blue blazer. Blazers with the emblem on it; they were very popular then. I think they gave me an orange; they gave me a lot of stuff.

[JCB] Irene Farage. Her husband was Judge Farage. She was head of the credit card department.

[SR] She was a nice lady and she realized I.....

[JCB] Also, today, we drove past the Wilbur's home, who owned Robertson's, and you used to baby-sit for their children, so do you think that might be in conjunction with why you got the job?

[SR] I got the job. I don't know if I told them I baby sat for them at a younger age. I could have. I did baby-sit for them... I guess only twice

really, for Robertson's, and when I come home during the summer, they let me work there.

0:31:11 [DH] Oh, so when you came home you had a part time job waiting for you.

[SR] Yes.

[DH] That was nice.

[SR] That was nice. Yes, she was a very nice lady. I wish I could remember what her name was.

0:31:21 [DH] Where did you go to school when you left South Bend?

[SR] Indiana University.

[DH] And how was Bloomington back in the '50's?

[SR] The town itself? Bloomington was prejudiced. I can tell you another story there. I don't know if you remember Nancy Streets. She was the first black Miss Indiana University, and she and I were roommates. We were friends. She tried to get me to run, but I told I didn't have enough talent. I can't sing or dance, either, unless it was some type of modern dance.

0:31:57 [DH] I have the brochures from that with her picture on it.

[SR] Yeah, and she ran on her own. The sorority that I belonged to wanted me to run, but at that time I just didn't like my body. I think back now about how many hang-ups you have when you're younger, and when you look back and look at the pictures... thinking that I wish I looked like that now.

0:32:21 But anyway, Nancy and I were meeting two of our friends. We were going to the movies in town, and right next to the movies was a soda shop where they sold, you know, sodas, potato chips, and ice cream and all that. They may have sold sandwiches. But Nancy and I went in to wait for them. We told them that we would meet them, not knowing that this place was prejudiced. When Nancy and I walked in, of course, they didn't know what we were. We sat down, we ordered a Coke, and then our two friends came in—Eunice, I can't think of the other girl's name, came in who were obviously black. You could tell they were black. And they came in and set down, put their order in, and the guy says—they hadn't brought our stuff out yet, and he says, "Naw, you can't order because we're closed now. We're getting ready to close."

0:33:16 Nancy and I had looked over at each other. We had just ordered maybe five minutes ago, and you're getting ready to close the shop up, and you know its daylight. So, then we realized what was going on. So, things like that tend to happen.

[DH] In the town itself.

[SR] Yes, in the town itself. You know, on campus, I don't remember anything happening.

0:33:52 [JCB] Tell him how you met your husband through Nancy.

[SR] Oh, yeah. My husband was an athlete. He signed with Philadelphia. They took him right out of high school, but before that he played football, too. He was just an all-around good athlete, and Indiana University was trying to recruit him and his brother to come play football for them.

So, there was this guy named Harry Johnson. What he did was, he worked with the athletic department, and his job was to get dates for his recruits that were coming. So, he asked Nancy and me, would we like to be one of his girls used to date these guys. So, I said, "Why not? I don't have a boyfriend," and I said, "Get a free meal on the weekends, and a free movie, and a free basketball and football game." Nancy said that she didn't have a boyfriend, so my husband and his brother were written up in the Ebony magazine. When he told us who we were going out with, and he said that they were the Hanes twins from Mount Claire, New Jersey, Nancy said "Oh yeah, Sandra, there is an article about them in Ebony." She went and got it and we're looking at the picture— "Which one do you want?" "I don't care. They both look alike to me." "Whatever," I said, "You know it's just a date."

0:35:33 So, when they came to pick us up, they picked Nancy up first. She came down, and he said, "Hmmm, she looks good. The other one can't look any better. If anything, she's going to look worse." So, my husband had it made up in his mind that Nancy was going to be his date. So, he went and walked to the car, and opened the door for her to get in. She got in, but before he knew it, his brother slid in next to her. He said, "Oh well, whatever. Whatever's left." Then I come down off of the elevator, and he looked at Harry and said, "Man, what are you trying to do, get me to live down here?" I had... my hair was about the color... I had been laying in the sun and putting peroxide on it. I was lying out on the flat roof, where you could lay out and tan, and I had this nice tan. I came down there and he said, "Hmmm."

That's how I met him. We had a little weekend date, and started going, and we ended up together.

0:36:46 [DH] So when you came back to South Bend, you went three years to IU and didn't graduate?

[SR] I went three years and after I met him, we got engaged and came back here, got married, then went to Jersey.

[JCB] He played professional ball.

[SR] Yeah, baseball. He was playing baseball.

[JCB] At that time, baseball players weren't making the money that they are today.

0:37:11 [SR] I can tell you some stories about what he went through because he had come from South Bend. He had to go through playing in the south. He played for Tennessee and even Florida. He had some stories to tell.

0:37:26 [DH] I bet he did. You came back here and got married then left?

[SR] I left. Went to New Jersey and been there ever since.

[JCB] That was his home though.

[SR] Yeah, he was from Mount Claire, New Jersey. He was playing for the Philadelphia Phillies, so he bought his parents a home closer to Philadelphia.

0:37:52 [DH] So you left, and your brother came back.

[SR] Billy.

[DH] Billy came back, and he worked here?

[SR] He worked here. Pam, my sister, she graduated and married a young man from here, and went to California before they got married. His brother was Howard Hughes. She married Howard Hughes younger brother.

[JCB] Wade Hughes.

[SR] Wade Hughes but we called him "Corky." How he got that name, I don't know.

0:38:24 [DH] Did you ever hear if there was a bit of jealousy between west side people and east side people? Did you experience that growing up?

[SR] Yes, because for some reason, the guys seemed to like the east side girls better than they did the west side girls and would let them know it. The nice-looking girls lived on the east side. They tell me that a lot of east side girls dated guys from the west side. I guess I didn't know why there was that rivalry, because they seemed to be nicer on the east side or something. Just kidding I grew up on the west side. Where were you?

0:39:10 [JCB] I was basically on the north side because Lincoln Way was North, so the school that I attended was Muessel and Colfax, and there were not that many blacks there that lived in that area at that time.

0:39:31 [DH] You never had an opportunity to buy a house here in South Bend?
Did your parents move?

[SR] We moved from 1107 Georgiana St. to 820 Almond Ct., which runs right alongside St. Albert's Church. You know where that is, now. And then it was considered a white neighborhood.

People that lived next to us on this side was German, and when they saw that we were moving in, we had, like, a cement driveway both of us used, then it went to the garage. The man next door didn't want us to move in, so what he did was, put a chain fence installed right down the middle, which was kind of dumb because he couldn't use the garage either. So, we could not use the driveway or get to our garage.

0:40:39 My father just took him to court. He (neighbor) sent somebody to put it up, and he had to send somebody to take it down. I guess that was his way of letting us know that he didn't want us next door.

So, when we moved in, of course my parents... Bill and Bobby were younger then. I was sixteen then. Bill was about ten or eleven and Bobby was about six or seven. All boys, so they had to really let them know that *you cannot play ball in the backyard. We don't want any reason for them to get upset with us.* And on the other side there were two teachers that taught at Leeper Park. I think they were white, and they moved out.

0:41:28 [JCB] What did they teach at Leeper Park?

[SR] I don't know what they taught.

[JCB] You mean the school near Leeper Park. Madison.

[SR] Madison, yes. Madison School. But yeah, they moved out right after we moved in, and a real nice family moved in by the name of Simeri. They were white, but they were so nice.

[JCB] The Simeri's had a lot of restaurants here in South Bend.

[SR] They were the owners, then, of his parent's restaurant. They were very nice. Then Mr. Zubert died, and his wife always seemed to be nice, but she wouldn't speak; but once he died, she came over. She had a garden, and gave my mother stuff, and they became very good friends.

0:42:30 [DH] So Mr. Zubert may not have been friendly or....

[SR] No, he *wasn't* friendly, he didn't want us to move in, he didn't want anything to do with us, and he didn't speak or do anything. And then when I got married, we had a reception at the church, but then when we came back to the house... everybody came back to the house, and I have a cousin, whose husband at the time like to fight, I guess, or always doing

something odd. He got into an argument. I don't know what happened, but somehow, he was on Mr. Zubert's grass, or his toe got on the grass, but my daddy had to go out there and say, "Andrew, come on back in the house." I don't know what Mr. Zubert did but we were all instructed not to do anything to make him upset. Do not put your foot on the grass...

0:43:33 [DH] Mr. Zubert was the one who put the chain linked fence up?

[SR] Yes.

[DH] In the middle of the driveway...

[SR] In the middle of the driveway, so he couldn't use and we couldn't use it.

[JCB] A lot of times, Sandra, people think because a black family moving in, that's going to be just bad. Then they turn around and they realized that this is a nice family and maybe that's why the wife couldn't do anything because of her husband.

0:44:04 It's like with Donald Streets, when he was a principal in Mishawaka. There was a white family over there that, when they had a PTA meeting, and Donald Streets tells this story quite often, he was the principal in Mishawaka, and a family came up to him and said, "You know Mr. Streets, we don't like niggers, but we like you." That was really paying him a compliment, in their way of thinking. There is one thing about Wallace that you could appreciate, is his honesty, because you knew where he was coming from.

0:44:44 Tell Dave about your incident getting your marriage license.

[SR] O.K.

[DH] Did you get your license here in South Bend?

[SR] My husband was playing ball. We had to get the time waved, and as soon as he gets here, "Come down to the courthouse, we'll do it for you, of course."

You know, when we got married, I don't know it still might be, whites and blacks could not marry in the state of Indiana in the 1950's. We got married in '61, so when we went in to get our license, he and I walked up to the desk, and just so happened there was a lady there by the name of Marnetta Williamson. She knew us, and we told Marnetta we were there to get our license. She said, "Well, OK," and she pointed up the steps, and said go to Judge somebody's office. When Richard and I walked away, no sooner than we walked away, everybody gathered around. "What happened? Did you refuse them because she's white and he's black? She

said, "Naw, girl. That's my cousin. I hadn't refused them, because they're getting their time waived, and I had to send them up to the judge. No, they'll be back down."

0:46:07 [JCB] Of course, a lot of time people said cousin...

[SR] She was my cousin. She just tried to let them know that I was black, too, by saying I was her cousin, so they would know I was black too.

[DH] So, she was African American; the lady you talked to?

[SR] Yes, Marnetta was African American.

[JCB] Yes. And fair complexion.

[SR] She was kind of light.

0:46:33 [DH] Well, I guess unless you have... I'm trying to think. You left when you were about 22...

[Audio ends]